

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 03328 022007Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 MCT-01 AID-05 /063 W
-----001778 022012Z /70
O 021935Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5559

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: RADICAL PARTY LEADER BALBIN DETAINED

REF: BUENOS AIRES 3176

1. DR. RICARDO BALBIN, HEAD OF THE RADICAL PARTY (UCRP)
WAS DETAINED FOR SEVERAL HOURS ON MAY 1 BY POLICE
AUTHORITIES IN THE TOWN OF VILLA MERCEDES,
PROVINCE OF SAN LUIS, FOLLOWING A REQUEST BY PARTY
MEMBERS TO HOLD A DINNER FOR BALBIN IN THAT TOWN WHICH
THE AUTHORITIES TURNED DOWN. ACCORDING TO NEWS ACCOUNTS,
SEVERAL LOCAL PARTY LEADERS WERE ARRESTED ALONG WITH
BALGIN AND BALBIN'S SON.

2. UCRP SOURCES IN BUENOS AIRES INFORM US THAT BALBIN
WAS RELEASED ABOUT 4 AM, MAY 2, AFTER HIS STATEMENT
WAS TAKEN BY A JUDICIAL AUTHORITY. PARTY SOURCES
BELIEVE THAT SAN LUIS POLICE WOULD NOT HAVE ARRESTED
BALBIN WITHOUT HAVING RECEIVED ORDERS TO DO SO FROM
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THEY SUSPECT THAT INTERIOR
MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS
LATEST POLICE ACTION. HARGUINDEGUY, AS WE REPORTED REFTEL,
IS BELIEVED BY PARTY LEADERS TO HAVE ALSO IMPIRED
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THE ARREST APRIL 23 OF UCRP LEADERS IN BUENOS
AIRES. HARGUINDEGUY MADE A STRONG SPEECH AT THE SAME
TIME EMPHASIZING THAT POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITY WAS
STILL BANNED AND PUNISHABLE UNDER THE LAW AND THAT
THE DIALOGUE CALLED FOR BY PRESIDENT VIDELA DID NOT
ENCOMPASS THOSE COMPROMISED BY THE PAST AND
AT ANY RATE HAD NOT YET OFFICIALLY BEEN INAUGURATED.

JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES ARE NOW REVIEWING THAT CASE TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANY JUDICIAL CHARGES WILL BE LEVELED AGAINST THE LEADERS INVOLVED IN THAT INCIDENT.

3. ACCORDING TO PARTY SOURCES, BALBIN IS IN GOOD HEALTH AND SPIRITS AND NOT SUFFERING ANY NEGATIVE AFTEREFFECTS FROM THE SAN LUIS INCIDENT. HE IS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO BUENOS AIRES TODAY.

4. FORMER GOVERNOR OF BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE, DR. OSCAR ALENDE, IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, INTERPRETED SAN LUIS INCIDENT AND THE PREVIOUS DETENTION OF RADICAL PARTY LEADERS AS INTENDED BY THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT TO DEMONSTRATE TO HARDLINING ELEMENTS IN THE MILITARY THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS CAPABLE OF KEEPING THE POLITICIANS UNDER CONTROL. COMMENT: BALBIN, MORE THAN ANY OTHER OF THE POLITICAL SURVIVORS FROM YESTERYEAR STILL ON THE SCENE, IS THE EPITOME OF THE CLASSICAL ARGENTINE POLITICIAN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE "GRAN ACUERDO" WHICH LED TO THE RETURN OF PERON IN 1973. CONSIDERED THE "GRAND OLD MAN OF ARGENTINE POLITICS" BY THE POLITICAL PRESS, THE LEADERS OF OTHER PARTIES RECENTLY PAID A MUCH PUBLICIZED CALL ON BALBIN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RECOVERY FROM A BRIEF ILLNESS. END COMMENT.
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CASTRO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTION, PARTY LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BUENOS03328
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780187-0536
Format: TEL
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197805104/aaaadkjs.tel
Line Count: 95
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 584bd593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BUENOS AIRES 3176
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2524402
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RADICAL PARTY LEADER BALBIN DETAINED
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, AR, (BALBIN, RICARDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/584bd593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014